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ABSTRACT

Based on a teacher's 14 years of experience in teaching writing, this manual was developed to help General Educational Development (GED) teachers to guide adults to improve their writing ability in preparation for the GED test. The manual is organized in four sections. The first section is a discussion of frequent concerns and problems that writing teachers have. These concerns are based on interviews with GED teachers, research, and the author's experience. The second section is an overview of the process approach to writing, and the third section is a summary of the whole language approach to literacy education and its implications for writing. Both the second and third sections begin with a general overview of the technique, proceed with some comments from those in the research field who have knowledge of the techniques, go on to describe a strategy for implementing the approach in the classroom, and conclude with a personal reflection of the author's experience with each approach. The fourth section provides practical activities and ideas for teachers of writing. A bibliography contains 34 references to trade books, textbooks, and journal articles, and an appendix contains teacher-made materials on writing instruction. (KC)

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A Report From
The Virginia Adult Educators' Research Network

Write Right Now!
A Writing Skills Manual for GED Teachers

by

Glenda H. Ballard

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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PREFACE
or
How To Use This Book

As way of introduction, perhaps I should clarify a few points about this document. First, the title, WRITE RIGHT NOW! actually has a triple meaning. The title could be read, first of all, as *Write...Right Now,* implying that one should not waste time worrying about the act of writing; rather, one should just plunge in and start writing because therein lies improvement. A second interpretation might be for a person to *Write Right...Now*. This meaning implies that the time ultimately comes--a final exam, a job application question, a GED--when an individual must demonstrate proficiency of one's writing ability, and correct writing must prevail. Finally, a third meaning could be that an individual, after having participated in the many activities included within this document, should be able to write correctly. While that last interpretation may sound rather presumptuous, hopefully some individuals will experience just that, and if so, this effort will not have been in vain. Whatever the interpretation, the title, above all else, should grab the reader's attention, and hopefully I have done that!

Another point I would like to mention is the layout of the manual. After much thought, I decided to take a very informal, conversational approach with the content for two reasons: first, because that is the way I write best; and second, because I want this manual to be usable and readable, and I decided this approach might make the document more "user friendly", to borrow a computer term. The manual is divided into four sections in addition to an appendix of activities, which may be reproduced, and a bibliography.

The first section, "Problems with Teaching Writing", is just that...a discussion of frequent concerns which writing teachers have. These concerns are based on interviews with GED teachers in the area, research, and my own experience.

Next, "The Process Approach to Writing" is an overview of a very popular approach to teaching writing in all facets of education from kindergarten through the college classroom. Hopefully, this section will give teachers incentive to consider the process approach as a viable alternative to teaching writing to

GED students as well. The third section, "Whole Language Experience and the Writing Process", is a summary of the whole language approach to literacy education and its implication for writing. In both the second and third sections, I have subdivided the content into Introduction, Professionals Speak, Strategies for Implementation, and Personal Reflection. I begin with a general overview of the technique; then, I proceed with some comments from those in the research field who have a knowledge of the concepts; next, I give a strategy for implementing the approach in the classroom; and finally, I have included a personal reflection of my own accidental experience with each approach.

In the fourth section, "Practical Ideas for Teaching Writing", I have provided activities and ideas for teachers of writing. Most of them are not original ideas; rather, they are ideas which I have accumulated over 14 years of teaching and ideas which I have gathered in the last few months for this document. I have tried to give credit to the original author wherever possible. In any event, I am not packaging these materials as new and innovative ideas from this author; rather, it is like a collection of recipes from my files which I have gathered and modified over the years.

I trust you will find this manual useful. Please take the ideas, modify them, and use them. Most of all, let's get those GED students to WRITE RIGHT NOW!

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I.

Problems with Teaching Writing

So, here you are. You have just been assigned the responsibility of teaching a group of adults who need to take the GED. After doing some assessment, you discover, not surprisingly, that the group ranges in ability from the lowest level to those almost ready to pass the test. Likewise, not surprisingly, the three areas that need some attention are math skills, reading comprehension and writing skills. Writing? How can one begin to prepare students for writing a full-length essay, especially in the amount of time available? And, how can one begin to cover the myriad of problems which students face with writing?

Does this scene sound familiar? Granted, preparing adults to take the GED can be one of the most rewarding experiences in education...but it can also be one of the most frustrating. The purpose of this section will be to discuss many of the problems which teachers frequently express when it comes to teaching writing. In addition, some solutions, strategies, or at least responses to each of these problems will be presented for consideration.

PROBLEM # 1: THERE JUST ISN'T ENOUGH TIME!

Often, when teachers are asked what kinds of problems they face with teaching writing, the overwhelming response is time. The teachers feel pressure

because they have to cover not only writing skills but also reading, math, social studies, and science in the limited class time that is available to them. The students add to that pressure because many of them want to get that GED immediately, and they can't spare the time it takes to actually improve their writing. They are looking for a "quick fix." Unfortunately, with writing skills it just isn't that simple. And, because teaching writing skills takes time and because there is no right or wrong answer (as there is in math), the act of teaching writing can be frustrating, even overwhelming.

Granted, while all of these problems are very real, the fact remains: students must practice their writing before they can expect to improve. Kazemek (1985) maintains that we, in adult literacy programs, perpetuate a myth that "facility, power, and range in reading and writing ability spring like Athena from Zeus's head. Most adult literacy programs are based on the assumption that literacy can develop in a relatively short period of time" (p. 333). Instead, what we, as adult educators, must do is concentrate on helping students prepare not only for the GED but for other writing situations which they will undoubtedly encounter throughout life. We must provide ample opportunities for students to work on their writing skills.

The key to the time issue is that students must be permitted to write every class period. No, the class does not have to be restricted to just writing, but students must be made to feel that writing is just as important as the other subjects, and allowing time to write every class period will further that idea. Atwell (1985) states, "Writers need time--to think, write, confer, write, read, write, change our minds, and write some more" (p. 150). In addition, you as the teacher must try to inspire students to write at home because the best way to improve writing is to write--a lot! Peter Elbow (1973) suggests, "If you are serious about wanting to improve your writing, the most useful thing you can do is keep a freewrite diary. Just 10 minutes a day" (p. 9). Another suggestion to the time problem is to allow students to combine writing with other subject areas. Have them write out word for word the steps they went through to solve an algebra problem. Or, have them state, in their own words on paper, the steps a bill must go through to become a law when studying social studies. Finally, have them read their own or each other's writing samples for the main idea, a reading comprehension task. Letting students see that the main idea is often the topic sentence of a paragraph--especially if it is a paragraph which they have written--could provide a crucial link between the two interrelated tasks, reading and writing.

The key is to incorporate writing into all of the instructional activities whenever possible. Then, students become absorbed in the activities of learning and do not see writing as an isolated exercise.

PROBLEM #2: I CAN'T POSSIBLY GRADE EVERYTHING THEY WRITE!

Teachers often feel they have a responsibility to read, grade, and respond to everything students write, checking for every mistake. One of the most productive concepts which has come out of the recent writing programs such as Bay Area Writing Project is the idea that teachers do not have to destroy every piece of writing which a student produces. In fact, with today's philosophy, that is the last thing which teachers should do. Students must first get over the fear that everything they write will be torn to shreds by you, the critic. One way to do that is to let students write--a lot--and you comment only on one certain aspect of that writing. For instance, one assignment might be to describe their favorite food. Your job on this assignment would be to overlook the errors and just comment on the specific descriptive words which the student has used in his writing. The amount of grading involved in this activity would be minimal. Or, you might just read a piece of writing and check for complete sentences. Rather than just marking the sentences that are incorrect, however, you might show the student how to combine sentences together or add words, thus ridding the paper of incorrect sentence structure while simultaneously showing the student how it is done.

PROBLEM # 3: I DON'T KNOW THE FIRST THING ABOUT GRADING WRITING !

Another frequent concern is that, often, the teacher in the classroom has not been trained as an English teacher, and therefore feels very inadequate when it comes to assessing another individual's work. And, granted, you may not know a dangling modifier from a comma splice. However, as a trained professional, you should have some working knowledge about what is or is not good standard usage. And that, coupled with the training which is readily available through various inservice programs on writing instruction, should equip you with the knowledge to help these students bring their writing up to an adequate level. Using these strategies advocated by leaders of the process approach to writing (Section II), teachers encourage students to look at the whole picture--the total essay--not just every little detail. Certainly, students must be taught to write correctly, but they need not be innundated with explanation about why a comma doesn't belong in a

certain place or how a subordinating conjunction might be a better choice. (However, if students demand to know those things--and some will--then it is appropriate to help them understand the concepts.) Again, the point should be emphasized that students do not need lengthy discourses on the evils of misplaced modifiers; what they need is practice writing and lots of it. They need to write...right now!

PROBLEM # 4: GETTING STUDENTS TO DO THE WRITING IS DIFFICULT!

This is a very real and a very difficult problem for most teachers. For a number of reasons, students are reluctant to write at all, or if they do, they frequently cannot think of enough to write or they do not write on the assigned topic. One of the first things you, as teacher, must do is to help students regain a self-confidence about writing. Notice I said "regain." It is my opinion that most people start out with an innate sense of writing, and unless handled very carefully, they lose the confidence that they can write somewhere along the way to adulthood.

To illustrate, both of my children, as toddlers, quickly learned that they did not know how to read. They would say, "I can't read this book", and go to someone who would read it to them. But my son, who is almost five, will sit down and "write" a letter to a friend or "write" a story (and expect me to read it!) although he barely knows the alphabet. Before the process approach was utilized in public schools, children were told that they could not write---that they had to be taught how to write. Today, my son will go into kindergarten "writing" stories through pictures and obscure symbols, and he will eventually learn the alphabet and how letters become words so that he may "write" his stories using symbols everyone else can understand.

The point is that most adults, somewhere along the way, have decided that they can't write; therefore, it is up to us to help them discover that they, like my five-year old, have the capacity to communicate through the printed word. All it takes is lots of practice, lots of opportunities, and self-confidence.

The only way to instill that self-confidence is for students to write and receive positive feedback on what they have written. Kazemek (1984) states that writing should free adult students from the detrimental effects of their past schooling. Writing activities in ABE should encourage risk taking, reliance on personal resources, and exploration of different functions of language and writing.

PROBLEM # 5: I CAN'T WRITE VERY WELL MYSELF--HOW CAN I TEACH OTHERS TO WRITE?

This is a very important issue to discuss. First of all, one way students can learn is from modeling. Graves, Britton, Kazemek all support the idea that teachers should participate in all writing activities as fellow writer and learner. That means that when a writing task is assigned, you as teacher participate right along with the group. Then, after the group finishes, it is important for students to feel comfortable sharing their work. Most of us are uncomfortable sharing our writing with others because it is a piece of us, and we are afraid that, if we do share it, we will be ridiculed in some way. If students see that the teacher is not afraid to open up and share his work, hopefully they will begin to share their work. And, not until a student becomes comfortable with letting others see a piece of work will that student be able to accept the comments which others have to give about the work.

This is a tough assignment to ask teachers to do. First of all, it is so much easier to use the time that students are writing to take roll, grade papers, or prepare for the next task. But, if students see you sitting there, struggling, churning over the same topic they are, they will begin to realize that writing doesn't come easily for most of us. And if you, with some anxiety, share your product with the group, your willingness should demonstrate to the students that it is natural to be uncomfortable sharing our work at first, but the more we do share our writing, the better able we are to accept the suggestions others have for us.

These are the primary concerns I encountered while compiling this manual. There are others, I am sure. Hopefully, the strategies presented in the next few sections will address some of those additional concerns.

II.

The Process Approach to Writing

INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant movements which has occurred in education in the late 20th century is the Bay Area Writing Project. This project altered the way teachers approached the teaching of writing, and moved the emphasis away from the traditional approach of teaching English to the process of writing and the conference-centered approach.

With the approach, teachers no longer stand at the front of the class and talk about "how" to write; students are given the task of writing. Teachers no longer dole out pages and pages of exercises with instructions to pick out infinitive phrases and comma splices; students learn about those concepts within the confines of their own writing. And, teachers no longer talk about how to write, give the students an assignment to write at home, and spend hours grading those compositions only to return them showered with red marks to students who do not understand what those marks mean; students, now, are expected to write during class after a mini-lesson has been provided by the teacher, and the teacher serves as a facilitator working with each student individually on his own personal piece of writing. This new approach, while controversial at first, has revolutionized how writing is taught.

PROFESSIONALS SPEAK

The writing process approach was developed by Emig (1971) at Rutgers, Flower and Hayes (1977) at Carnegie-Mellon and Graves (1983) at the University

of New Hampshire. Its use in GED classrooms has been supported by Taylor (1987) and Swartz and Whitney (1987). The task of writing is broken into four steps: pre-writing, writing, revising, and editing. During pre-writing, students learn how to brainstorm and select a topic. Then, after a topic has been selected and ideas have been jotted down, the student moves to the writing phase. Next, students learn to revise and edit using a variety of techniques.

The applicability of this approach to a GED classroom seems obvious. Taylor (1987, p. 25) supports this approach for a number of reasons, including the following: the teacher serves as facilitator; students are actively, not passively, involved; students write better papers; teachers do not spend as much time grading; and classrooms tend to become practical, relevant, and interesting for teachers and students alike.

Students who have participated in a conference-centered approach see writing as a process, and their works are something to be shared with others. Elbow (1973) suggests that writing is a studio craft and should be treated as such. Also, students write about what they know; gone are the days when the teacher pulls some obscure topic out of the sky and expects everyone to create a model essay on that topic. Rather, students draw from their own experiences, thus feeling like something of an expert rather than an uninformed amateur on some topic that has no relevance.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The four general steps...pre-writing, writing, revising, and editing...have been modified and given other labels, but the basic principles are the same. Whether in class, at home, or in a testing situation, the process which a student should employ to write for a formal assignment is similar. The next few sections outline both the steps a writer should employ to create a piece of writing and a technique which teachers may use to implement the process approach.

STEPS TO BETTER WRITING

Many people have the mistaken idea that good writers simply sit down and write a perfect letter, paragraph, or essay from start to finish. However, writing is a process consisting of a number of steps.

- Thinking about a topic.
- Freely jotting down ideas about the topic.
- Narrowing the topic and writing it in one sentence.
- Selecting, dropping, or adding ideas about the topic.
- Arranging ideas in a plan.
- Writing a first draft.
- Rethinking and revising as necessary.
- Writing a new draft.
- Proofreading for mechanics.

Writers may modify these steps in a variety of ways, but essentially this is the process one should complete, and teaching students to do this is what the process approach is all about.

THE WRITING WORKSHOP

Teachers who have been trained to teach English in the traditional format (or who have not been trained to teach English at all) might find it helpful to have an outline of how a typical class, conducted as a writing workshop, might operate using the process approach to writing.

Organization Of Class Time

The Mini Lesson

This is the opening five to ten minutes of the writing workshop. Here the teacher presents lessons on the organization of the workshop, topic selection, revision techniques and writing skills. Any aspect of language arts traditionally taught in the classroom can appear here.

Writers Write

This is the main part of the workshop. Students write for thirty-five to forty-five minutes. Students develop their own topics in whatever form they wish--narrative, descriptive, informative prose, letters, poetry, and so on. The teacher writes with students at least once a week.

Writing Conferences

As students write, the teacher moves about the room--in zig-zag fashion--to talk about the examples of writing. Students may need help in topic selection or in developing their ideas like guided practice.

Editing/Publication Conferences

As students write, the teacher also holds individual editing conferences. These sessions take place only after students have edited their own papers and placed them in the "teacher-edit" box.

GroupSharing

This section of five to ten minutes brings closure to the writing workshop, allows writers to discover what others are doing in the class, and permits one or two students to get help from the group on writing.

The above plan gives you some idea how a writing workshop might work; it also illustrates just how non-traditional writing classrooms have become. In addition, Appendix (#1) contains a list of steps a writer should go through during the writing process and some workshop rules for writers; these may be duplicated and passed out to students.

THREE STAGES OF THE CONFERENCING APPROACH

The three stages of the conferencing approach include pre-writing, conferencing, and editing. Students must be taught the importance of all three stages and encouraged to complete each one.

Pre-Writing

William Faulkner has been quoted as saying, "Get it down. Take chances. It may be bad, but it is the only way you can do anything really good." The first step for any writer is to get something down on paper. Often, in a testing situation especially, staring at a blank page wondering what to write will consume a person's time, thus creating a feeling of anxiety. The purpose of pre-writing is to help the writer get started. Inevitably, the question, What can I write about?, will surface; another function of teaching students to pre-write is to help them create a body of information so that they will have something to write about. Pre-writing also refers to the short, writing activities conducted in class and designed to get the writer started. The section on writing ideas (Section IV) has a number of pre-writing activities that are fun, easy, and guaranteed to get the most reticent writer to respond.

Editing/Conferencing

Yet another activity included in the process approach is editing/conferencing. This technique involves talking to the writer about his writing and responding to the questions or frustrations which the writer may be experiencing. Care must be taken not to edit too quickly. Elbow (1973) states, "The habit of compulsive, premature editing doesn't just make writing bad. It also makes writing dead" (p. 6).

The following suggestions were compiled by Ann Boessen, Dolly Wheelan, Bette Hinkle, and Trish Carr with regard to conferencing.

- The writer reads his own work to the teacher.
- The teacher looks at the reader remaining attentive and quiet.
- The teacher accepts what is written.
- There are no marks placed on the paper by the teacher.

Another use of conferencing involves using a technique known as peer review. Often, students will not feel comfortable reviewing each other's work; one technique for helping to overcome this is to give each reviewer five index cards (3x5). Ask them to respond to five questions, one on each card. The questions are listed below and are also listed in Appendix (#2) for duplication purposes.

- 1st card--author
- 2nd Card--The part I liked best.....
- 3rd card--I think the point of this paper is.....
- 4th card--I would like to know more about.....
- 5th card--A part that seems confusing to me is.....

A third component of conferencing is the use of questions when dealing with students and their papers. It is important that the writer do the talking; the reviewer's function is to help the writer think about his writing and to think about how he may improve his composition. Until the writer speaks, nothing significant has occurred in the writing conference. Typically, this is difficult for a traditional teacher because that individual may not know what questions to ask in order to get the student to open up and discuss his writing. Rutledge (1987) provides a very extensive list of types of questions and responses which may be used during conferences. These are listed on a reproducible list in Appendix (#3).

The Revising Process

The final technique in process writing which teachers and students often find difficult is the revision process. Certainly, the ability to read one's own work and make productive changes requires much more complex skills. However, the editing process is essential; Elbow (1973) believes that "Editing must be cut-throat. You must wade in with teeth gritted. Cut away flesh and leave only bone" (p.4). Appendix (#4) contains a list of questions which students may ask themselves as they attempt to edit their work.

MY PERSONAL REFLECTION ON THE PROCESS APPROACH

In 1979, prior to any exposure to the process approach to writing, I was teaching five sections of ninth grade English, and I became concerned at the poor writing skills many of the students exhibited. Many of them could diagram the most difficult compound-complex sentence, yet their own writing lacked organization and unity. While I was concerned about their writing, I was also well aware that I had 135 students; and, if I planned to have any personal life at all outside the classroom, I could not conceivably grade 135 essays a week. So, I hit upon an idea.

Every Monday at the beginning of class, the students were given a topic idea and they were expected to write for ten minutes. I call it a "topic idea" because they were not restricted to that topic; if it reminded them of a personal experience, they were welcome to depart from the topic and write. I would take the papers up at the end of ten minutes; generally, the students would have written about one paragraph, though some did more and some less. Before Wednesday, I would read and correct the papers. I did not just make comments such as "fragment", for instance; I literally fixed the sentence for them. They got the papers back on Wednesday and they had until Friday to re-write the papers. The assignment was not considered finished until the paper was rewritten, so they did not get a grade unless the paper was corrected. The results were amazing. After about the fourth paper, the students' work began to improve. After re-writing the papers, students told me they would start to make a common error and they would think, "I am not going to make that mistake again because if I do, Mrs. Ballard will make me re-write it."

Now, this was a survival strategy on my part. I wanted students to improve their writing, but I knew that I was not prepared to give up all of my free time grading papers. This way, I managed to show them their most common mistakes, I did it without having to sacrifice that much of my personal life, and the students learned from the experience. And, because the assignments weren't lengthy, students didn't whine and complain about the work. While the assignments were never long, they were consistent. Every Monday, as regular as spelling tests on Friday, we had a writing assignment. And the write/re-write theory, as I called it, helped them to understand their mistakes and how to fix them.

I realize now that the reasons the ninth graders' work improved are the same principles that govern the process approach: students usually write willingly

about a topic of some interest; they don't get a paper back with red marks and a grade--rather, they get back a response which they must read, think about, and revise; and finally, the job isn't finished until they have re-written the paper. Those tenets, coupled with the idea of teacher as facilitator and writing coach--not a taskmaster with a red pen for a whip--are what make the process approach to writing successful.

III.

Whole Language Approach and Writing Instruction

INTRODUCTION

In the last few years, a new approach to teaching adults to read has established a place alongside the ever-popular Laubach program and the Literacy Volunteers of America. The whole language approach views language in its totality, not just reading; thus, its applicability to teaching adults to write seems appropriate.

Unlike the process approach, whole language does not just treat one of the language arts skills, but rather involves teaching reading, writing, and speaking in a holistic approach. The concept is discussed in this manual because it offers some helpful strategies to get adults to see the relationships between reading, speaking, and writing; therefore, it can offer some important information about teaching adults to write.

PROFESSIONALS SPEAK

According to whole language theorists, people should be taught to read and write naturally and holistically in the same manner as they learn to speak. The whole language view can be summarized by the following tenets (Keefe, et al., 1991):

- Reading, writing, speaking and listening should be based on similar principles and processes.
- Language should not be taught in a fragmented manner.
- Working on one aspect of language (for example, reading) automatically helps other aspects, such as spelling, grammar, punctuation and other language skills.
- Language is a meaning-centered activity and, above all, is meant to make sense.
- Language is learned through use. One learns to read by reading, to write by writing, and to speak by speaking.

The whole language approach to adult literacy incorporates the four major language arts--listening, speaking, reading, and writing--into one encompassing activity. The principle behind this approach is that language should not be taught in a fragmented manner, and that working on one aspect of language automatically helps other aspects. Kazemek (1984) maintains that a writing and reading are supportive activities and cannot be separated without fragmenting the written communication process. Shiver (1990) states that in a program based on a whole language framework, the learner will

- engage in talking about what they know about a topic;
- realize that they know a lot;
- listen to and learn from one another;
- raise questions and make hypothesis about the subject;
- read to add information or reconstruct meaning in their own minds;
- write to organize and interpret the information gained, construct new meanings, and apply understanding to their own lives; and
- read their writing to peers who listen, talk, react, and extend the ideas.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Coombs (1987) presents a strategy for managing the instructional program using the whole language approach in her teacher training manual. Essentially, she states that for the GED test, the whole language approach can be used to strengthen critical reading skills and improve writing competence. The major strength of the whole language approach is that, as students begin to understand the elements, structure and function of written language, they can put the pieces together more easily and effectively themselves. As students learn to read better, they realize what a writer does to help them, so they can better anticipate their reader's needs.

GED preparation teachers need to create opportunities for students to read. Some ideas include the following:

- Set up reading discussion groups, so that students can discuss what they read either in or out of class.
- Have students write reading journals, in which they react to what they have read. The reading can be one page or a book. But it should interest the student and provide some kind of response.
- Provide reading material to teach the skills of selecting main ideas, drawing out unwritten topic sentences, identifying supporting material.
- Use passage from GED preparation materials.
- Bring a variety of reading materials to class, including popular magazines such as *Soap Opera Digest, Sports Illustrated, Popular Mechanics, Parents;* short humorous articles and stories; cartoon. Allow occasional breaks for students to look over the material. They may find they are interested in reading after all.

Also, one technique for teaching students how to take the GED test includes reading, writing, and discussing a sample reading passage. An exercise like this accomplishes two goals: it teaches about the structure of paragraphs and essays and it provides the writer with immediate feedback about the effectiveness of his summary statement. The procedure follows and is also included in Appendix (#5).

1. Ask your students to read the first sentence of a GED reading passage, and set goals for their reading. using the following questions:
   What do I expect to learn from this passage?
   What clues do I find in the first sentence?
   Will I read all of the passage, or look for only relevant sentences?

2. Next, ask students to list in the order they expect to find them, the points the writer will discuss. They can check off each point covered in the reading. If they do not get the clues in the first sentence, suggest that they read the second, and so on, until they begin to see the writer's purpose.

3. After reading the passage, discuss their answers to the three questions. The more of these exercises students do, the more accurate their reading goals will become.

4. Finally, offer a writing topic, asking students to summarize their responses in one sentence. They can read each other's summary sentences and list what they expect the writer to cover. (Coombs, 1987)

Another strategy using the language experience approach to include teaching writing skills, as outlined by Bette Hinkle of Fairfax County (VA) Public Schools, and which could be used with beginning readers, includes the following procedure. (Also included as Appendix #6).

1. Invite student to tell story or personal experience
2. Teacher or student writes
3. Teacher reads story, pointing to words
4. Teacher, then student reads one sentence, pointing to words
5. Pick out meaningful words
6. Write these words on cards
7. Student matches cards to story
8. Mix cards and have student read words on cards
9. Write additional words in story on cards, as above
10. Read with student, teacher supplying words not taught as the student reads known words
11. Give student the story and cards to take home and practice
12. Keep a copy for typing or rewriting

Regardless of what we may think of the whole language approach, the idea of teaching the language as a whole supports and substantiates the claims that writing should not be an isolated experience; rather it should be a part of the entire educational experience. One other handout, Language Experience Variations, is provided in Appendix (#7).

MY PERSONAL REFLECTION ON THE WHOLE LANGUAGE APPROACH

In 1987, in Atlanta, Georgia, I participated in a week-long intensive training workshop for an IBM interactive video reading program invented by Dr. John Henry Martin, the same man who had invented Write to Read for children. In the adult program, Principles of Adult Literacy System (PALS), Dr. Martin relied heavily on the whole language concept.

In this instructional program, students hear the words as they read them on the computer screen; they are encouraged to verbalize the sounds of the words along with the interactive video. In addition, adult learners are taught to touch-type using a very basic word processing program; the underlying theory is that adults can learn a valuable skill--touch typing--while simultaneously adding another dimension to the language process--that of touch. In this approach, students hear the words, see the words, sound the words and touch type the words.

With one class of low-level reading students, this program was a major breakthrough for them because they, at last, were able to make the connection that the spoken word is the read word is written word. Seeing this relationship, the students improved remarkably, not only in reading, but in writing and in self-esteem as well.

Personally, it was a major breakthrough for me because I witnessed that students needed to incorporate as many of the senses as possible into their

learning. As it was, PALS had involved four of the adult learners' senses; if I could have thought of some way to add the sense of smell, I would have done so!

The implications of the whole language approach for writing teachers in a GED classroom are two-fold. First, students should be encouraged to involve all of their senses in the learning process. I used to tell my students, "You only have five ways to get into you brains: eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and fingers. Use any of them you have to in order to grasp a concept!" Second, helping students see the relationship between reading and writing and speaking; between the printed word, the written word, and the spoken word; and helping them to understand the holistic approach to language which whole language theorists espouse will only help them fit the pieces of this complex puzzle of education together more easily!

IV.

Practical Ideas for Teachers of Writing

Donald Graves (1978) states: "Writing is the basic stuff of education. It has been sorely neglected in our schools. We have substituted the passive reception of information for the active expression of facts, ideas, and feelings. We now need to right the balance between sending and receiving. We need to let them write" (p. 45). Many teachers are more than willing to help students improve their writing. Part of the problem, as discussed in Section I, is building it into the curriculum. The purpose of this section is to provide a variety of strategies for getting those students to write. This section includes a hodgepodge of writing ideas for the classroom. Some of the activities will take only five minutes; others are major assignments that will take much longer. Some of the suggestions are good ice breakers for the classroom; others will require the writer to spend time in reflective thought. Credit to the individual source is indicated on those which I found during research for this manual; others are ideas or activities which I have accumulated from college courses or staff development workshops over the past 14 years. I have intentionally arranged this section so that strategies may be pulled out of this text, copied and used. The activities may be divided into three categories.

- **Section I** includes prewriting and getting started activities.
- **Section II** includes ideas for essay development.
- **Section III** includes techniques for teaching certain concepts.

Section I

Prewriting and Getting Started Activities

QUICK AND EASY WRITING IDEAS

The following list provides activities designed to get students to write. They are coded using the following key: A = Beginning Level; B = Middle Level; and C = Upper Level. Many of the activities overlap and are labeled as such, or the activities may be modified to address a group with different needs.

1. (a,b,c) Free writing-Have students write non-stop for a given time period. They may write about any subject they wish, grammar and punctuation do not matter, and they are free to ramble about several subjects at once. The idea is to get their thoughts on paper.

2. (a,b,c) Focused free writing--Like free writing, focused free writing follows the same rules or guidelines. The one difference is that the teachers calls out specific one word subjects, and the students write whatever comes to mind about that subject. (e.g. Grandfather, Hamburger, Marriage)

3. (b,c) Cartoon Commentary--Bring to class copies of a cartoon which has had the dialogue in the blurbs removed. Allow students to fill in the blurbs and write their own cartoon.

4. (a,b,c) Interactive journals--Like journals, the students write about whatever is on their minds. The difference is the student makes an entry and turns the journal in to the instructor. The instructor then responds to that entry and returns it to the student. It is letter writing in a journal format. (Note: This has been one of the most successful ways I have found to get students to participate in journal activities).

5. (b,c) Silent conversation--Pair the students up with one piece of paper between them. Force them to communicate on paper for about 10 or 15 minutes. They carry on a conversation on paper:THEY MAY NOT TALK TO EACH OTHER.

6. (b,c) Interview--Pair the students up and assign them five questions or so to ask each other. They record the responses of their partners and then write a paragraph about what they learned. Questions might include the following:
   a)Who is this person and why is he/she here?
   b)What is the person's career goal?
   c)Where does he/she want to be 10 years from now?
   d)Is there anything unusual about this person?
   e)What is his/her strength? Weakness?

7. Interview a guest--Have a guest visit your class. Require the students to be responsible for asking one (b,c) question each (at least). Instruct the visitor to respond to the questions as he likes, but not to offer too much information. Make the students pull the information out of the guest. Then have each student write a paper about what they learned about the guest.

8. My Foot's Turn--Give each person a sheet of paper. Have them remove one shoe and trace the pattern of (a,b,c) one foot on the sheet of paper. Then, inside the foot print, have them to write what the foot might say if it could talk to its owner.

9. Orange Exercise--Provide each person with an orange. Give them a few minutes to get acquainted with their (b,c) oranges. Explain that they should look for distinguishing characteristics on their oranges, but they are not to make any marks on them in any way (no pen marks, fingernails, etc.). When they feel they know their oranges, take the oranges up and shuffle them in a pile. Let the students come up and find their oranges. (Yes, they will be able to identify them!) Then, have them write paragraphs describing their oranges.

10. Field Trip--Send the students on a field trip. Have them record sense impressions of what they see, hear, (c) feel, or smell. Write those impressions in a paragraph.

11. Response to a Song--Select a song or a poem that would evoke a response from the group. Have them (a,b,c) listen to the selection while reading the lyrics and then react to them on paper. One example for ESL Hispanic students might be a song written by Woody Guthrie and Martin Hoffman and sung by Dolly Parton entitled, "Deportee." (Appendix, #8)

12. A Personal Possession--Have the student bring one possession from home. In class, allow the students (b,c) to explain why that possession is the one they selected. Then, let them write, essentially, what they said in class.

13. Grab Bag--Fill a grocery bag with little, obscure items from home. Have enough for each person in your (b,c) class to "grab one." Have them describe the item in a paragraph without telling what it is. Then, let them trade papers and see if another person can guess what is being described.

14. Create a Poem--Have each person to complete the

phrase "If I were..." on a sheet of paper. Collect
(a) the papers and compile each response on a chalkboard into poem-like fashion. As a class, rearrange the lines to make it more aesthetic.

15. Adopt-A-Poem--Select a poem such as Judith Viorst's poem "Talking". Maintain part of the poem but then
(b,c) allow students to insert their own lines for the rest of it. (Appendix #9)

16. Likes Poem--To emphasize using the senses in descriptive writing, have the students complete a
(a,b) "Likes" poem. You supply the following lines:

These things I love to see:
These things I love to hear:
These things I love to feel:
These things I love to taste:
These things I love to smell:

Students fill in between the lines three things they like to see, hear, etc. The final product will be a "likes" poem.

17. Sentence Modeling--Pull sentences from one source you are using in class. Have the students model the
(b,c) sentence by using the format but changing the words. For example, you write the following sentence on the board:
"Wearily, the tired, downtrodden, cowboy led his horse into the barn."
The student might do the following:
"Lazily, the sleek, yellow cat knocked his toy mouse off the couch."

18. Sentence Combining--This is a great way to teach sentence structure without calling it that. Write a
(b,c) list of short, simple sentences on the board. Have students work to combine them into one long sentence.
Example:

I am bored.
I am tired.
I wish it were summer.
Then I could go swimming.

Student response:

If it were summer I could go swimming; then I would not be so bored and tired.

19. Reading Groups--Establish reading groups of no more than six students each. Use these groups frequently
(b,c) with some of the aforementioned activities. Encourage students to become comfortable reading to their group.

20. Publishing--Plan to publish your student's best work. Several options might be available. If you have a

(a,b,c) department newsletter, perhaps students could submit their work for consideration. At the very least, compile a booklet of two or three of the students' best work and distribute it to the group at the end of the semester.

21. (b) Continuing Story--Use a familiar childhood strategy: Have the students to start a story on a piece of paper. After five minutes, they pass their papers to the persons next to them, and then they write on the new story they have received. Repeat this procedure until each person receives his original story. Require them to put an ending to the story. Read the stories aloud.

22. (a,b,c) "The Man Walked Down the Road"--This exercise teaches brainstorming, sentence parts, and the importance of using exact language. Besides all that, the students love it. Put the students in groups of 5 or 6. Each person copies the sentence from the board: The man walked down the road. Have the groups brainstorm for one minute about words to replace man (e.g. drunk, hobo, lawyer). Then, put every word on the board that the groups had on their lists. Have each student rewrite the sentence, using one of the new nouns in place of "man." Next, do the verb "walked" the same way. Each student selects a more exact verb than walked. Then, discuss words to describe "man"--adjectives. Follow the above procedure. Last, do words that describe "walked"--adverbs. Finally, have each student read his own sentence to illustrate how different the sentences will be with exact language. A student's final sentence might sound like this: "Wearily, the tired, homeless drunk staggered slowly down the road." (Appendix #10)

23. (b,c) Word Pyramid--To help beginning students to see the relationship between words, show them how to build a word pyramid. Do one together and then pass blank pyramids for them to complete.

test
objective test
easy objective test
easy objective test in science
easy objective test in science on Friday

24. (b,c) Write & Read. Do a free write on a specific subject. Form reading groups and pass papers around the circle; each member reads silently and then passes it to the next person. Ask group to agree on one best paper and have the author to come up and read his paper aloud.

25. Power Writing. Write as many complete sentences as possible in three minutes. Count the number of words.
(c) Put the total at the top and circle. Do three rounds a day.

26. Journal Writing. Journals have been abused, misused and generally overworked as a writing strategy.
(b,c) Still, they remain an effective way to get students to write. See attachment for a list of journal ideas. (Appendix #11)

27. Show, Don't Tell--Writers typically need to be reminded that it is far better to help the reader see
(c) something rather than to just tell him about it. This activity lets students experience the importance of letting the reader experience the incident rather than just being told about it. (Appendix #12)

MORE IDEAS

The following list of activities was contributed by the following teachers in Fairfax County, Virginia: Ann Boessen, Trish Carr, Bette Hinkle, and Dolly Whelan. They are adapted from Applied Writing, a 310 Project conducted in New York City in 1982.

The following activities suggest some ways which students can be stimulated to generate words, lists, sentences, notes, and free writing. They are coded with the following key: Beginning Level = A; Middle Level = B; and Upper Level = C. These codes are not exclusive (e.g. an upper level activity might be adapted for a lower level).

Words

1. (a,b) Ask students to write all the words they can think of in five minutes all over a paper. Afterwards, they should group them to form an abstract poem or a long sentence. Assign partners. Each person can borrow words from another to write another poem or sentence.

2. (a,b,c) Print names of students vertically down the left side of the blackboard. Using each vertical letter, elicit descriptive words written horizontally.

3. (a,b) Ask students to study headlines in the newspaper. Have them write their own.

Lists

1. (a,b,c) Ask students to--
(a) Make a list of at least 10 items they wish they owned
(b) Categorize and order them in terms of importance
(c) List reasons why one is most important or least important
(d) Exchange with another student. Discuss.

2. (a,b) Ask students for their favorite color. Tabulate a list. Elicit discussion about how colors can represent moods, feelings, symbolism, etc. Give them an excerpt to read about it. Ask them to pick one color and to list a reason why it is a favorite. Or use actual swatches of fabric to elicit discussion about color.

3. (b,c) Ask students to list all the reasons a particular number means something to them. Compare. Discuss whether the reasons chosen were intended to inform readers or to persuade them.

4. (b,c) Guide students to make two lists comparing how people can resemble pet animals or other things.

5. (a) Ask students to imagine they are confined to a small room for 24 hours. Have them list all the words and

feelings they might have.

6. (c) Tell students to imagine they have just been born. List the feelings they might have.

7. (b,c) Give students different kinds of lists. Ask them to discuss what kind of person may have written the list, for what purpose, and for what audience.

8. (a,b) Ask students to generate lists they need for a particular purpose (e.g. shopping, reminders, things to do). Then guide them to categorize them.

9. (a,b) Ask students to look at a painting, object or picture. They should list every word that comes to mind, then order the words, and then write sentences.

10. (a) Direct students to close their eyes and listen for five minutes. Then have them list all the sounds they hear.

11. (a,b,c) Blindfold students. Pass around something to taste. Remove blindfolds. Have them list word discussing the taste.

12. (c) Guide students to write a list of instructions for an activity which someone else has to do. Have another person do it, following the writer's instructions!!!

13. (b,c) Guide students to list ingredients for a favorite recipe. Have them write the recipe afterward.

Sentences

1. (c) Ask students to write 1, 2, or 3 sentence reactions to questions (e.g. what was the worst (best) year of your life?) Or ask them to define themselves in 1, 2, or 3 sentences.

2. (b,c) Divide the class into 3 or 4 member groups. Have them write a cooperative story. One begins and each student adds another sentence.

3. (b,c) Bring in some advertisements. Discuss in terms of sentence length, word choice and persuasive appeal. Establish criteria with students regarding effectiveness of ads. Have students generate ideas for original products and ads. Ask them to invent a new product and write an ad for it.

4. (a,b) Bring in some samples of postcard greetings. Discuss and analyze in terms of audience and purpose. Have students create a greeting card to send to someone.

5. (a) Offer sentence completion statements. (e.g. If I could be something else, I would be a _____ so I could be _____. (Appendix #13)

6. (b,c) Put a thoughtful quotation on the chalkboard or distribute copies of it. Generate discussion about its meaning. Allow students to alternate bringing in Thought for the Day (one they have found or one they have created).

7. (b,c) Distribute figurative phrases or statements to the group. Ask them to discuss its meaning and to rewrite the statement literally. (e.g. needle in a haystack, fit as a fiddle)

Note Taking

1. (b,c) Do a pantomime or improvisation in class with students or by yourself. Ask students to take notes describing what they are seeing. Arrange in small groups. Ask them to compare notes and then to write a group paragraph incorporating each other's notes.

2. (b,c) Have students interview each other. They take notes and then write a paragraph summary.

WRITING IDEAS
from GED Items, January/February, 1988, Volume 5, Numbers 1-6

Writing and the Daily News:

Gather enough copies of the local newspaper for your students. Ask the students to complete one or all of the following activities:

--Change ads into paragraphs.
--Change a graphic into a paragraph.
--Rewrite the weather forecast from a map graphic to paragraph form.
--Using a list of personal ads, choose one and write a paragraph describing the person in the ad.

Expand a Basic Sentence

--Expand a basic sentence such as "Bears eat" to "Big brown bears and young deer eat red berries slowly in the woods."

--Next, armed with a familiarity of how sentences are formed, try the three step plan.

1. Have the student write a short sentence in the form: subject, verb, object ("Somebody does Something").

2. Have them write three sentences about their first sentence.

3. Have the students write five sentences about each of the three words from their first sentence explaining more about the original thought.

Pre-writing Exercises

These three activities were obtained from a manual compiled by Joan Chikos Auchter and used at the ABE/GED Study Institute at the AAACE Conference in Utah on November, 1990.

Exercise 1:

Materials: bread, jelly, peanut butter, spoon, knife
1. Have partners or groups spend fifteen minutes writing instruction for making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

2. Have member of group or partner read instructions aloud to another group member who will make the sandwich EXACTLY AS INSTRUCTED.

3. Have group discuss what steps were out of sequence, what steps were omitted, and what specific information was left out. Have the whole group rewrite the instructions as someone makes the sandwich.

Exercise 2:

This can be done with pairs, small group, or large group.

1. Give students a topic (i.e. school). Give them 15 minutes to brainstorm and come up with ideas.

2. Have students use a mapping or clustering technique to identify major ideas and ideas that support the major ideas. Allow 10 minutes.

3. Allow 5 minutes to identify a topic sentence.

4. Allow 15 minutes to develop the writing.

5. Have a group share.

Exercise 3:

Materials: Newspaper article or excerpt from literature. Scramble the order of sentences. (Try to find articles ordered from specific to general, general to specific, and least important to most important idea.).
1. Give students copy of article and have them identify the main idea of the writing.

2. Have students order the writing.

3. Have partner or group read the reordered piece aloud.

4. Partner or group member should have original copy to compare ordering.

Section II

Ideas for Essay Development

POWER

This strategy was obtained from Janet Vucinick and Michaele O'Conlin's "Ideabook on Writing for GED Instructors in ABE." The letters P*C*W*E*R outline the steps to writing an essay.

PRE-WRITING: Before you can begin to write a composition you must recall as many ideas about your subject as possible. There are several good strategies you can use to help you generate ideas.

(1) Brainstorming: Think about the general topic and jot down your thoughts as they occur.
(2) Freewriting: Write about the general topic without stopping. Write as quickly as you can for at least ten minutes. Just think about getting ideas down on paper. Don't worry about correct writing: Look carefully at what you've written to get ideas for your paper.
(3) Listing: This is a little more specific. You may focus on a certain part of the topic and then write ideas as they come to you.
(4) Discussing: Discussion can be general or specific--in small groups or with just another person. Sharing ideas with others is a good way to clarify your ideas and may help you see other ways to look at your topic.

ORGANIZING: The ideas you developed in the pre-writing stage need to be considered carefully as you prepare to write your paper. Here are some specific skills to help you get your ideas organized.

(1) Choosing: An important skill in writing is using only the ideas or information that relates to your topic. There will be ideas that are interesting in your pre-writing work but just don't fit the paper you're planning. Weed those out!
(2) Grouping/Categorizing/Classifying: These are good ways of putting ideas together into a bigger picture. You consider how individual ideas might relate to each other and help you develop your topic.
(3) Clustering: As you look at your ideas, you may see a couple of key concepts or ideas you want to develop. Circle them or write them down and then use arrows or other symbols to connect your other ideas to the "key word."
(4) Prioritize: Sometimes ideas need to be organized according to some order: sequence, importance, or chronology.

WRITING: Once your ideas are more organized, you'll be able to see how to work them into the basic expository form: introduction, body, and conclusion. You'll want to be sure to include specific details and examples from your pre-writing work to support your ideas. The organization strategies you used earlier should result in a more logical presentation of your ideas.

EDITING: This is the time to look at your writing for correctness in punctuation, usage, grammar, and spelling.

REREADING: As you read your final paper make sure you stayed on the topic and that your ideas are clearly expressed.

STRATEGY FOR ORGANIZING AN ESSAY

This technique is designed for students to be able to organize their thoughts visually and to complete their ideas in an outline format before writing their paper. It is called QAD which stands for Question, Answer, and Details. Below is a sample of how one student might apply this technique. For a reproducible copy of this outline, see Appendix (#14).

Question	Answers	Details
What does this task require?	Decide whether the drinking age should be raised to 21	
What opinion will I state?	I agree that the drinking age should be raised to 21.	
What examples, reasons, and details will I use for support?	1. The largest percentage of deaths due to drunk driving occur in the 16-21 age range. 2. Greater maturity is required for people to make judgments about drinking safely.	1. Research by MADD shows that young people under 21 do not exercise good judgement 2. Young people are ruining lives by drinking too soon.
How will I conclude this essay?	I believe the drinking age should be raised from 19 to 21 in order to reduce the slaughter on the highways and the unhealthy results to those who begin drinking before they are mature enough to make sound decisions.	

SAMPLE ESSAY TOPICS

The following topics for practice for the GED essay sub-test are taken from the General Educational Development Testing Service of the American Council on Education.

1) Dieting used to be something that people did if they were overweight. Now, everybody seems to be on a diet, regardless of the need to do so.

Why do so many Americans feel compelled to go on diets? What are some of the effects of this dieting obsession on the way Americans live? Explain your answer to one or both of these questions, giving reasons for your opinion and supporting your view with specific examples.

2) The automobile has certainly been responsible for many changes in the United States. Some of these changes have improved our lives and some have made life more difficult or unpleasant.

Write a composition of about 200 words describing the effect of the automobile on modern life. You may describe the positive effects, the negative effects, or both. Be specific and use examples to support your view.

3) "It always strikes me as a terrible shame to see young people spending so much of their time staring at television. If we unplugged all the television sets, our children would grow up to be healthier, better educated, and more independent human beings."

Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Write a composition of about 200 words presenting your view and supporting it with examples from your own experience or your observations of others.

Suggested Writing Topics

From: The GED Writing Skills Test Essay, Teacher Training Manual, Maine Department of Education and Cultural Services, Division of Adult and Community Education, and the Adult Education Staff Development Project, University of Maine, 310 Project, 1987.

A. Incomplete sentences:
1. I think television is...
2. The most valued I felt was...
3. My life is important because...
4. My wildest fantasy is...
5. Sometimes I wish I...
6. When I'm driving, I really get annoyed when...
7. I really like people who...
8. When I get my GED, I...
9. I love/hate winter because...
10. When I'm down in the dumps, I...

B. Quotations:
1. "If you write about the things and the people you know best, you discover your roots. Even if they are new roots, fresh roots...they are better than...no roots " Isaac Bashevis Singer
2. "The surest way to prevent war is not to fear it." John Randolph
3. "I would sooner fail than not be among the greatest." John Keats
4. "The way to a man's heart is through his stomach." Fanny Fern (Sarah Payson Parton)
5. "A good book is the best of friends." Martin Farquhar Tupper
6. "Next to the very young, I suppose, the very old are the most selfish." William Makepeace Thackeray
7. "Bravery never goes out of fashion." Thackeray (written in 1860)
8. "It's a long land that knows no turnings." Robert Browning
9. "I wish I loved the human race;
I wish I loved its silly face;
I wish I liked the way it walks;
I wish I liked the way it talks;
When I was introduced to one;
I wish I thought, "What Jolly Fun!"
Sir Walter Raleigh
10. "I wonder what Adam and Eve think of it by this time." Marianne Moore

C. Controversial Statements:

1. Tests are unfair.
2. Television is the greatest thing about living in the 1990's.
3. People who can't take care of themselves should live in nursing homes.
4. I hate cats.
5. Cigarette advertising should be banned.
6. A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle.
7. American should buy American-made products.
8. Everyone should learn to speak another language.
9. The death penalty should be legalized in every state.
10. The war on drugs should be our government's top priority.

D. Questions

1. Why did you go back to school?
2. What is your ideal job?
3. Who are your heroes? Why?
4. Should television newscasters be entertainers or news reporters?
5. When did you feel you were at your best?
6. What do you need to be completely happy?
7. What was your greatest adventure?
8. What do you think is America's greatest problem?
9. If you could change one thing about your life, what would it be?
10. How do you spend your days off?

E. Essay Preparation Questions:

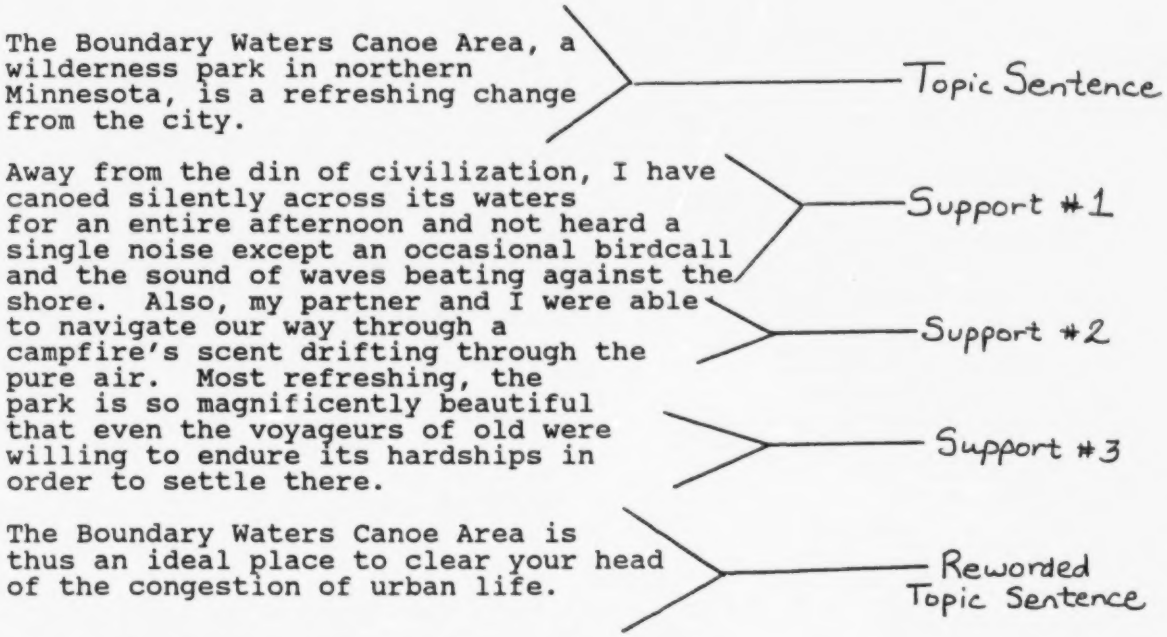
1. Compare living in the country to living in the city.
2. Discuss the advantages or disadvantages of being a parent.
3. Compare and contrast reading and watching television.
4. Explain why you like/dislike televised sports/soap operas/cartoons.
5. Illustrate how you go about answering an essay question.
6. Select a legal drinking age and support your choice.
7. Discuss the issues of job safety in your workplace.
8. Describe the quality of the environment in your town.
9. Describe the difficulties in awarding custody of children in a divorce settlement.
10. Explain the reasons for having a returnable bottle bill.

Section III

Techniques for Teaching Certain Concepts

The Structure of a Paragraph

I used this activity in my classes to help them visualize the concepts of main idea, specific support, and reworded topic sentence as conclusion. I then passed out a worksheet that gave them practice doing this activity. (Appendix #15)


The Boundary Waters Canoe Area, a wilderness park in northern Minnesota, is a refreshing change from the city.
Topic Sentence
Away from the din of civilization, I have canoed silently across its waters for an entire afternoon and not heard a single noise except an occasional birdcall and the sound of waves beating against the shore.
Support #1
Also, my partner and I were able to navigate our way through a campfire's scent drifting through the pure air.
Support #2
Most refreshing, the park is so magnificently beautiful that even the voyageurs of old were willing to endure its hardships in order to settle there.
Support #3
The Boundary Waters Canoe Area is thus an ideal place to clear your head of the congestion of urban life.
Reworded Topic Sentence

Now look at the outline of the paragraph:

Topic Sentence: The Boundary Waters Canoe Area is a refreshing change.

Specific Support #1: Quietness
Specific Support #2: Purity of Air
Specific Support #3: Beauty

Reworded Topic Sentence: Ideal place to clear head of congestion of urban life

FROM PARAGRAPH TO ESSAY

Helping students to see the relationship between a short one paragraph paper and a full-length essay is easier if they can visualize the differences between the two. This example comes from Evergreen, an excellent writing text by Fawcett and Sandburg. I show them a copy of the single paragraph on an overhead transparency. Then, I show a copy of the full essay and we compare the two.

The Paragraph

For a number of reasons, college instructors should not require attendance. First, college students are adults and should be treated like adults. Second, rigid attendance policies can penalize some students unfairly. Third, unfortunately, the lectures of some teachers at the college are not always educational. Finally and most important, there is no proven correlation between attendance in a course. Required attendance is like an old custom; people still do it without asking why. However, when we examine the facts, required attendance in college courses does not make sense.

The Essay

Required class attendance is so common at this college that many students and even instructors simply assume it is a good thing. In fact, for a number of reasons, college instructors should not require attendance.

First, college students are adults and should be treated like adults. Allowing each student to decide when and how often to attend class encourages responsible behavior. The opposite is also true. Requiring class attendance is a form of babying that promotes irresponsibility.

Second, rigid attendance policies can penalize some students unfairly. Tim, for example, entered the final week of Math 201 with an A average. Although he had already taken all four cuts allowed by his instructor, he decided to cut the final week of classes in order to attend a math conference. Tim got an A on the math final, but his instructor gave him a C for the course because of "poor attendance."

Third, unfortunately the lectures of some teachers at the college are not always educational. These instructors merely repeat in class material from the assigned textbooks or waste class time by telling irrelevant stories. The responsible student should be allowed to decide for himself or herself whether an in-class experience is worthwhile.

Finally, and most important, there is no proven correlation between attendance and performance in a course. Dr. Radley, Dean of Students at the college, admits that there are no studies proving that compulsory attendance improves course performance. While requiring attendance may mean that the student who does nothing but come to class may learn something just by sitting there, this is not necessarily the case for most students.

Required attendance is like an old custom; people still do it without asking why. However, when we examine the facts, required attendance in college courses does not make sense.

Appendix

#1

WHAT WRITERS DO WHEN THEY WRITE IN WRITER'S WORKSHOP

1. Rehearse (find an idea)
2. Draft first copy
   Confer (may be with teacher, partner, or editing group)
3. Draft second copy (revision)
4. Decide content is set
5. Self-edit
6. Teacher-edit
7. Produce final copy

WORKSHOP RULES FOR WRITERS

1. No erasing
2. Write on one side of paper only
3. Save everything--create a history of composition
4. Date and label everything--Draft #1, draft #2 (and so on)
5. Speak in quiet voices only
6. Work really hard
7. Bring your work to the workshop

PEER REVIEW--A CONFERENCING APPROACH

In the conferencing approach to writing, students are asked to peer review another person's work. This technique will help make this job much simpler and will help the writer benefit from the reviewer's suggestions.

Pass out five 3x5 index cards to each person who will be peer reviewing another person's writing. On each card, write the following statements. The reviewer should respond to the statements on each of the cards. Return these cards with the piece of writing to the writer.

Title of Work Author	Card # 1
The part I liked best....	Card # 2
I think the point of this paper is....	Card # 3
I would like to know more about....	Card # 4
A part that seems confusing to me is....	Card # 5

QUESTIONS FOR TEACHER REVIEW SESSION

In the conferencing approach to writing, it is imperative that the student (author) talk to the teacher about an individual piece of writing. Often, these conversations are one-sided with the teacher doing all of the talking. The questions below are designed to help get the author to talk about his writing.

Questions to start conversation about the writing:
1. Tell me about your piece of writing.
2. What part do you like best? Why?
3. Why did you choose this subject to write about?
4. How do you feel about your story?

Questions about the content:
1. Do you have enough information?
2. Do you have too much information?
3. Do you have more than one story here?
4. What do you think you can do to make this piece better?
5. What is the most important thing you are trying to say?
6. Underline the part that tells what the draft is about.
7. Circle the part that is the most exciting.

Questions about specifics:
1. Explain how the title fits your story.
2. Are you happy with the beginning and ending?
3. What are your action words? Can you add others?
4. Did you tell us something or did you show us by using examples?
5. Can you think of a different way to say this?
6. Does the beginning grab the reader's attention?
7. What works so well you'd like to try to develop it further?
8. I'm not sure I understand this part.
9. How did you feel when this happened? Did you write your feelings?

Questions about the draft:
1. What did you learn from this piece of writing?
2. What do you intend to do with the next draft?
3. What surprised you in the draft?
4. How does this draft sound when you read it aloud?
5. How does this piece compare to others you have written?
6. What kinds of changes have you made from your last draft?

Other questions:
1. Why is this important to you?
2. What problems are you having or did you have?
3. This is what I liked about it.
4. What do you need help on?
5. What questions do you have of me?

QUESTIONS FOR SELF-EDITING

Listed below are questions which writers should ask themselves as they are editing their own writing. Once this process is completed, then the writer is ready for someone else to read the piece of writing--either the teacher, someone in the class, or an editing group.

1. What is the main idea of this paper? Is it clearly stated in one sentence which I can underline?

2. Do the paragraphs all support the main idea mentioned in #1 above? Can I underline the topic sentence of each paragraph?

3. Does every paragraph relate to the main idea? Also, does every sentence in each paragraph relate to the topic sentence of that paragraph?

4. Do the paragraphs follow some logical order (usually either time, space, or order of importance)?

5. Does each paragraph provide good details, well-chosen examples, or clear illustrations?

6. Have I provided a beginning, middle and ending? In other words, do I have an opening paragraph and a concluding paragraph?

7. Have I provided a title?

READING AND UNDERSTANDING A GED READING PASSAGE

The technique described below explains how to read and interpret a passage on the GED reading test. Do this exercise as a group and encourage participation.

1. Ask your students to read the first sentence of a GED reading passage, and set goals for their reading using the following questions:
   What do I expect to learn from this passage?
   What clues do I find in the first sentence?
   Will I read all of the passage, or look for only relevant sentences?

2. Next, ask students to list in the order they expect to find them, the points the writer will discuss. They can check off each point covered in the reading. If they don't get the clues in the first sentence, suggest that they read the second, and so on, until they begin to see the writer's purpose.

3. After reading the passage, discuss their answers to the three questions. The more of these exercises students do, the more accurate their reading goals will become.

4. Finally, offer a writing topic, asking students to summarize their responses in one sentences. They can read each other's summary sentences and list what they expect the writer to cover. (Coombs, 1987)

WHOLE LANGUAGE APPROACH AND THE WRITING PROCESS

The following procedure could be followed to help a beginning reader/writer to understand the relationship between speaking, reading, and writing. This exercise was obtained from Bette Hinkle of Fairfax County, VA.

1. Invite Student to Tell Story or Personal Experience
2. Teacher or Student Writes
3. Teacher Reads Story, Pointing to Words
4. Teacher, then Student Reads One Sentence, Pointing to Words
5. Pick out Meaningful Words
6. Write these Words on Cards
7. Student Matches Cards to Story
8. Mix Cards and Have Student Read Words on Cards
9. Write Additional Words in Story on Cards, as Above
10. Read with Student, Teacher Supplying Words not Taught as the Student Reads Known Words
11. Give Student the Story and Cards to Take Home and Practice
12. Keep a Copy for Typing or Rewriting

LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE VARIATIONS

1. Dictation

   The student dictates a short passage.
   The teacher writes it word for word on a large sheet of paper.
   The teacher reads the story back to the student.
   The student reads the story.
   In future lessons read the story or develop vocabulary, sight words, or language lessons based on the story.

2. Transcription

   The student or group of students tells a story from personal experience.
   The story is tape-recorded and later transcribed by the teacher.
   The tape and the story are used in future lessons.

3. Directed Writing

   A. Sentence completion activities are "filled in" by the students.
      1. When I think of my country, I feel _____
      2. When I think of my children, I feel_____
      3. When I think of Saturday night, I feel_____

   B. Students complete question and answers. Each student writes a question. Questions are passed to others and responses are written and read. (Some call this Ann Landers.)

      Q. What is your favorite T.V. program?
      A.

      Q. How do you meet men in this town?
      A.

4. Free Writing
   Each student, working individually, writes about a personal or a shared group experience.

   Students may read their work aloud at the end of class or the teacher may prepare the work for sharing at the next class.

"Deportee"

Written by Woodie Guthrie and Martin Hoffman. Sung by Dolly Parton on "9 to 5 and Odd Jobs."

The crops are all in and the peaches are rotting
The oranges are piled in the Cresote dumps
You're flying them back to the Mexican border
To pay all their money, to wade back again

Chorus:
Good-bye to my Juan, good-bye Rosalita
Adios mis amigos, Jesus and Maria
You won't have a name when you ride the big airplane
All they will call you will be deportee

Some of us are illegal and some are not wanted
Our work contract's out and we have to move on
But it's 600 miles to the Mexican border
They chase us like outlaws, like rustlers, like thieves

My father's own father, he waded that river
They took all the money he made in his life
My brothers and sister come work the fruit trees
They rode the truck'til they took down and died

The airplane caught fire over Los Gatos Canyon
A fireball of lightning that shook all our hills
Who are these dear friends all scattered like dry leaves
The radio said they were just deportees

#9

Reproduce the following poem and read aloud with the class. Then pass out a copy with just the underlined lines visible and ask them to fill in the other lines with examples of what they talk about.

T A L K I N G

by Judith Viorst

They tell me that I talk too much.
I'm trying not to talk too much.
But oh, it's hard to take time out
When there's so much to talk about:
How long it took to pull my tooth.
How hard it is to tell the truth.
Why steel is not as nice as trees.
Why Brian has such scabby knees.
Twelve sights I saw in Williamsburg.
The definition of an "erg."
Why roller skates are not my style.
Six reasons goldfish never smile.
How come I'd rather freeze than roast.
And ten things that I love the most:
The mustache on my father's face.
Fires in the fireplace.
And any book by Judy Blume.
Never cleaning my room.
Every single Valentine
Sent to me by Chris Romine.
Drummers in a marching band.
Ferry rides,
The Redskins,
Poems, and
Talking.

THE OLD MAN WALKED DOWN THE STREET

This is a simple activity which I use at the beginning of the semester because it serves several useful functions. First, it teaches my students the concept of brainstorming. Second, it creates a familiarity with the parts of speech. Finally, it helps students see the value of using the most exact word possible to create an image.

1. Divide the class into groups of 5 or so. Have them select a secretary, but also explain that each person needs to have a pen and piece of paper.
2. Write this sentence on the board: "The old man walked down the street."
3. Explain that there are a lot of other words that could be substituted for "man."
4. Brainstorm for one minute in groups some words which could replace "man." Have the secretary record their responses.
5. Write list on board, soliciting responses from each group.
6. Instruct students to write the sentence again substituting one word from the list on the board for "man."
7. Ask what part of speech is "man."
8. Next, go to "walked." Repeat steps 3-5, this time brainstorming for verbs.
9. Once again, ask students to write the sentence using his new noun and add a new verb from the master list on the board.
10. Ask what part of speech is "walked."
11. Next, discuss what words would describe the man. Use the phrases "what kind", "what color", "how old", "what size". Again, repeat steps 3-5, this time brainstorming for adjectives.
12. As in steps 1-9, use same noun and verb, but pick 2 adjectives to describe your man.
13. Ask what part of speech are these words.
14. Now, ask the groups to brainstorm for words that tell how the man walked down the street. Repeat steps 3-5, this time brainstorming for adverbs.
15. Rewrite sentence one more time adding an adverb or two. Show how these words can be at the beginning, middle, or ending of the sentence.
16. What part of speech are these words?
17. Have students read their sentences aloud. Notice the diversity and the exactness of each sentence.

This activity lasts about an hour. Students love it and they learn a little about the group process as well.

Note: You can add prepositional phrases as well if time permits. Also, you can ask students to write other sentences before and after their sentence to create a short paragraph about "their man."

THINGS TO DO IN A PERSONAL JOURNAL

When internal inspiration/motivation fails, any of the following can be used to generate a topic for a journal entry.

1. Describe an interesting/dull place you went in the last three days.

2. Discuss an advertisement that offended or attracted you.

3. Take a famous saying or cliche and criticize it.

4. Leaf through a dictionary and discuss five interesting words you did not know.

5. Make a nomination for the ugliest spot on campus.

6. Make a list of five habits that offend you.

7. Pretend you are someone quite different from yourself and write in his/her voice.

8. Gripe about how much work you have to do.

9. Respond to an event in the news or an article in the paper.

10. Write about your home town.

11. Write about a recent meeting you attended.

12. Narrate a major social blunder you have made.

13. Discuss all the time you waste.

14. Discuss a way in which you are a hypocrite.

15. Defend being a hypocrite.

16. Speculate on your life ten years from today.

17. Discuss a role you play (mother, student, friend,etc.)

18. Describe a specific teacher as he/she enters a classroom and begins.

19. Make up a word we need and define and illustrate it.

20. Write a poem.

21. Discuss a song you like/dislike.

Showing, Not Telling

"Don't say the old lady screamed. Bring her on and let her scream."

When you "show" what happens instead of "telling" you give your reader details to focus on. The scene seems real and vibrant. Here is an example.

Telling

One day a boy came to our house. He knocked and I answered the door. He was so weird. He was crazy. His clothes were stupid. He was about my sister's age. He talked a lot and tried to act cool. He and my sister went on a date.

Showing

When I opened the door, there stood my older sister's date.

"Hey, man," he said. "What's goin' on?"

He had on Lee jeans, a yellow and orange shirt, a blue tie, and blue suspenders. His shoe laces were yellow. Before I could say anything, he picked up my new electric control Lamborghini and zipped it across the floor nearly hitting the coffee table.

"Man, this is cool. I'm goin' to get me a real one of these soon as I get a job. I may even buy a Jag, too. I'm goin' have probably four or five cars. I know all about them."

Then my sister came into the room and they left.

"Nice talkin' to you," he said, looking at himself in the hall mirror as they went out the door.

Try these topics

Cafeteria food is bad.
The party was fun.
My parents seemed angry.
The movie was frightening.
The jocks think they're cool.
I was embarrassed.
My room was a mess.

Note: You may not use this sentence in writing. Rather, show this event instead of telling it.

#13

SENTENCE COMPLETION

1. I knew it was going to be a lousy day when I saw_____
2. The earliest vivid memory that I have is of_____
3. What matters most to me is_____
4. My favorite place in the whole world is _____
5. The craziest dream I ever had was _____
6. The person who influenced me the most is _____
7. The best thing I ever did was _____
8. Divorce is_____
9. My favorite TV show/ movie is _____
10. The most fun I ever had was when_____
11. In just three easy steps,_____
12. _____is a good hobby because _____

The following list is from "Short Snappers for Daily Writing" by Monique Gratrix and Ruth Hayden.

1. Twenty things I want to do before I am 40.
2. Ten things that make me cry.
3. I get angry when.....
4. When I am a parent, I will let my child.....
5. The things I could change about school are.....
6. If I could go back in time, I would go to.....

THE FOUR KEY QUESTIONS TO RESPOND TO A GED WRITING SAMPLE

Question	Answer	Details
1. What does this task require?		
2. What statement, opinion, or main idea will I develop?		
3. What examples, reasons, or details will I use for support?		
4. How will I conclude this piece of writing?		

Exercises

A. Outline the following paragraph as we did with the sample in class.

Three common electric distractions on my desk waste my precious study time at night. The most notorious of these distractions is the clock, constantly humming to remind me how little time I actually have. Another interruption in the course of an evening of study comes when the high-quality fluorescent desk lamp begins to buzz, flicker and eventually go out. And, finally, consider that fascinating little box, the calculator, that does all kinds of complicated math problems and even spells out simple words if I hold it upside down. After stopping to worry about the time, fix my lamp, and play with my calculator, I am too tired to study, so I just go to bed.

Topic Sentence:_____

Specific Support:_____
Specific Support:_____
Specific Support:_____

Reworded Topic Sentence:_____

B. Outline this paragraph.

Old, stiff, and weathered, my grandfather's hands mirror the strenuous way of life he has known as a working man. Many hot summer days spent tilling the stubborn soil of West Texas have left their lasting mark in the form of a deep and permanent tan. Grandpa's hands are also covered with calluses--begun, perhaps, when he split cordwood for two dollars a day in an effort to pull his family through the Great Depression. Most striking, though, are the carpenter's scars he has collected from the days of building his house, barn, and fence, and from unending repair jobs that still occupy his every day. Although only in a small way, Grandpa's hands bring back images of a time when men worked from dawn to dusk just to survive, a simple but respected way of life.

Topic Sentence:_____

Specific Support:_____
Specific Support:_____
Specific Support:_____

Reworded Topic Sentence:_____

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